CHRIST IN THE HOME - 2

BY

RAOUL PLUS, S.J.

(A Translation from the French)

THE HOME

A CHRISTIAN SETTING

ONE of the most touching descriptions is found in the account by Louis Veuillot of his visit to the home of one of his old friends whom he had not seen since the day of his marriage fifteen years before.

The visitor was admitted by the old servant who did not recognize him. He had to give his name. "Come," she said, "The Master is upstairs with Madam in their own room."

They went up. It was still the blue room whose picturesque decoration his old friend had admired so much in days past.

He recognized his friend despite the work of the years upon his features; his eyes were still keen, but it was evident that he had been weeping. The wife he remembered only vaguely.

"In my memory she was the fairy of youth dressed in flowing robes, crowned with flowers, with a smile on her lips, approaching reality over the green roads of Spring. A smile that nothing chased away, a mind that had never known fear, ears that had heard nothing but gentle words, hands that carried only wreaths of flowers, she personified the morning, the gloom, the promise of life. So she appeared to me on her Wedding Day—a Christian woman yet a child, a harmony of beauty, faith, love, candor. She was earnest because she believed; happy because she loved; radiant because she was pure.

"Now after fifteen years she is a wife who has aged from the cares of her home; she is a daughter in mourning for her mother, a mother in mourning for her children.

"On her pallid face the torrent of her tears have furrowed more deeply the traces of the years; in her heart, submission to the Cross; she stifles the sob of Rachel. I remembered that we used to call her Stella Matutina, Morning star; now, I thought, we would have to call her Mater Dolorosa, Mother of Sorrows."

Then his eyes glanced at the walls of the room. They were not adorned as before. Formerly, there had been no crucifix. Now there was one. It occupied the place once held by a picture of Diana, the Goddess of the Chase. A little distance away, there was a picture of Mary at the Foot of the Cross.

"We put it there to replace some poetic pictures at the time our first child died," the husband explained.

He continued, "This design above the dressing table where we used to have the painting of 'The Great Festival of Watteau' is a copy of my father's tombstone in the village cemetery. It is over in that direction that I began to build and the cypress trees around the house are the first trees I planted. Here at the side is the picture of my wife's mother; she died in this room which we alone can use from now on. These other pictures are what remains to us now of all the dear souls who reared us, worked and suffered for us, and provided so tenderly for our happiness. And here is a picture of our dear little Therese, our

little saint, the second child God took from us. She left us last year when she was only six years old. She cried out before she died, ‘God, God, where is God? I want to go to God!’ She took with her the last happy days of her mother.”

All that does not depress souls. Earth after all is not heaven. It is only the vestibule. That in itself is beautiful. And, as the author explains at the end of his description, “separations only increase our confidence, love, and peace.”

JUDICIOUS ECONOMY

CHRISTIANITY demands detachment. Of all, interior detachment— to use things as if we did not use them. Of some, complete exterior detachment—the vow of poverty for religious which differs in degree of severity according to the Rules of the Order entered, from the actual and rigid deprivation of the disciples of Saint Francis of Assisi to the simple dependence relative to the possession of things or administration of money required in Congregations which are less austere.

But what should be the degree of effective poverty required or at least desired in people of the world?

We hear people speak of the “duty of improvidence” or the “virtue of insecurity.” What are we to think of these expressions and the ideal they express?

It is certain that love of gain is dangerous and that privation when accepted in the right spirit detaches.

It is equally certain that normal gain, that is to say not beyond bounds and obtained through honest means, is legitimate. Furthermore, economy, when it is not grounded in avarice or inordinate attachment to money but in the virtue of prudence, is not to be condemned.

With the good sense for which he is famous, Saint Francis de Sales says very aptly in Part One, Chapter Three of his “Introduction to a Devout Life”: “If husbands would not desire to amass any more than Capuchin monks, would not their piety be ridiculous, ill-regulated, and unbearable?”

Pope Pius XI, as well as Leo XIII, far from condemning economy expressed the wish that all should be in a position to benefit from it. Here is what is expressly stated in the Encyclical, *“Quadragesimo Anno,”* a replica one ought say of the famous Encyclical on “The Condition of the Working Classes” written forty years earlier:

“It is necessary to do everything possible that the share of wealth which accumulates (in certain hands) may be reduced to a more equitable measure and that a sufficient abundance of it is divided among the workers . . . so that they may increase through economy a patrimony capable of permitting them to meet the burdens of their family.”

There are in these lines a condemnation of excess and the justification of the practice of economy.

Excess constitutes the hoarding of wealth, the accumulation of reserves for one’s own personal use and with no thought at all for the common good—“to put in reserve and accumulate for one or several persons, under the form of gold, moneys, bank notes or even certain company titles, an excessive power of purchase instead of spreading it for the common good of the whole of humanity,” is the way Pius XI expresses it.

The practice of economy is clearly indicated: “Under the direction of the Eternal Law and the universal

government of Divine Providence, notes Leo XIII, man is his law and his providence." We must not ask God to reward our folly, our folly of spending wildly, putting nothing aside with the presumptuous assurance oneself, "God will help me if I fall into want."

There must be no passivity in our abandonment. We have to cooperate with God. Do one's best and then count on Providence should be our motto.

Far from us be any such thing as pagan foresight which makes us practically ignore the role of Divine Providence and count only on the money we have piled up; which makes us lose sight of the real purpose behind the practice of economy which is decidedly not to guarantee protection from want to a few but to help along toward the well being of all. Must we remind ourselves that superabundant capital may not be spent according to the whims of the owner. The surplus wealth which people possess, as our Lord has clearly pointed out, must be considered as a "trust-fund to be administered for the good of others, a stewardship, a guardianship which is to be exercised for the good of the community and in the interests of the community."

THE PROVIDENTIAL ROLE OF INSECURITY

GOD is not the enemy of security. He wants man to earn the daily bread for his old age by his labor. He wants society to guard against depressions and to guarantee to all a life protected by law. He requires certain privileged individuals to come to the aid of their brothers in need, especially, as it frequently happens, when society is powerless to help.

Does that imply then that God cannot permit insecurity for someone's good? Certainly not. It is so easy to abuse security:

- Perhaps through selfishness by skimping one's life, refusing the entrance of love into one's life or setting up barriers to the possible gift of children from Divine Providence.
- Perhaps by purely pagan prudence, the attitude of the wicked rich in the Gospel, I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones.
- Perhaps by pride. What is Divine Providence anyway? I have money and the means of making it bring in more. God doesn't count.

In addition to its already precious role of crushing false hopes of security conceived by pagan-mindedness, insecurity has power proper to itself.

It forces us to think of God. Here I am, I have done all that I could, worked my best, saved without being niggardly but with legitimate prudence and now I am struck by a catastrophe—the death of the head of the family, or an untimely accident, war . . . I have nothing left, or if it is not so bad as that, Trial has at least made deep inroads on the possessions I had.

What should I do? Get discouraged? Never!

I will call up all my energy; try to salvage from the present situation whatever can help my best efforts and count on Divine Providence without in the least neglecting foresight. God helps those who help themselves.

I must believe that Our Lord surrounds those who find themselves in need through no fault of their own with a special predilection. "Do not forget," wrote a navy lieutenant to his wife at the outbreak of the

war of 1914, “that uncertainty permits us to count more on God . . . riches hide some of God’s delicate attentions from us . . . We have the best of the game with God.”

What a beautiful expression of faith! Since human aid can so easily fail, God owes it to Himself to come to the aid of those who put their trust in Him. “We have the best of the game with God!”

Consequently, abandonment to God is in keeping with wise foresight.

A person does his best to avoid falling into a state of need. If God requires that all or much of his efforts come to naught, he ought not despair; let him submit valiantly to the yoke again; if he has a lively faith, he will thank God for having permitted “the caresses of poverty.” The individual of himself could never have achieved the actual poverty of religious life; he can now at least accept the privations permitted by Providence and strive to live more literally the Gospel precept: “Make for yourself purses that do not grow old, a treasure unfailing in heaven, where neither thief draws near nor moth destroys.” Luke XII, 33.

THE SNUFF BOX

FATHER VAUGHAN, known from the poorest to the most distinguished sections of London as a famous preacher, the brother of several prelates one of whom was the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, learned much from his father who was a colonel in the British Army.

One day, at table, the little fellow took a very greedy portion of jam. His father reproved him for it and clinched his correction with the comment, “Whoever wants to become a man—a gentleman--knows how to conquer himself.”

The child was hurt and becoming somewhat impudent retorted, “Oh, after all, Papa, you have your snuff box!”

Colonel Vaughan immediately put his hand into his pocket, drew out the snuff box and before the whole group threw it into the fire.

The history of the Vaughan family provides many such incidents that make profitable reading.

That’s what we call fair play. If one wants to get another to do something, he must first of all do it himself. There should be justice. Not that children have a right to judge their parents, but parents should be careful not to give their children occasion to judge them badly.

We are sometimes amazed when young people who were very pious at one time and who have received a Christian education from start to finish, later on abandon the practice of their Faith. We must go back to the source. The mother was a practicing Catholic, the father suited himself about attendance at Mass; he had very quickly given up family prayer. The children rarely saw him perform an act of worship. No other explanation is needed to clarify everything.

The same holds true for the spirit of sacrifice, for prayer, and for refined manners.

Here is a child at table who has a mania for crumbling his bread into little pieces or to scatter crumbs all about his plate. The mother corrects him, for it.—“Oh but Papa does it too!”

So it goes with everything. People say they are terrible children. Why of course, all children are terrible. They record with unerring fidelity the examples they witness. And since examples strike incomparably

harder than words, parents preach in vain, if they themselves do not practice; instead of forming, they deform. who knows whether the little irregularities of today will not culminate in the regrettable crimes of tomorrow.

Great consideration should be given to the fact that “the child is father to the man.” Parents are therefore bound to watch themselves, their habits, their behavior, their speech.

Parents will be so free at table; they criticize the Pope, the bishops, the pastor, such and such persons among their relatives and acquaintances; their judgments are only too frequently severe or at least imprudent. Need they be astonished if later their children “who come from such Christian families,” are free in passing criticisms about their highest superiors and other persons most deserving of respect. Whose fault is it?

“But they’re so little; they don’t understand what we’re talking about!” How do you know? Although they do not understand everything or at least not right away, some impression will stay with them, and the habit of judging indiscriminately will be well planted to sprout later. What great damage is done! What out-and-out imprudence!

I will pay great attention to my children. They can be my best educators. I should give them the least possible occasion to teach me a lesson.

ESTRANGED PARENTS

THERE can be such separation of soul between parents that they finally live their own lives; they no longer live together as husband and wife; they are father and mother, but not exactly husband and wife—a situation unmeasurably sad.

Sadder still is the home in which the father and mother still maintain husband and wife relations but do not understand each other at all; they are perpetually arguing or sulking or exchanging sharp words; they no longer love each other and consequently find that their life together offers nothing but constant occasions to make each other suffer.

If these unfortunate individuals have children, especially younger children, have they never wondered what possible questions might be tormenting their little heads; what bewildered anguish strangles their little souls which vainly seek to bestow their frail yet ardent love somewhere in this remote region made bleak and barren by battles.

How can they decide whose part to take? They can’t.

“Whom do you prefer, your mamma or your papa?” someone asked a little boy.

He hesitated a moment, then said, “I prefer them both.”

And even if the child’s heart leans more toward the one than the other, how could it decide who is more in the right or more in the wrong?

Those wretched parents who are so out of harmony with each other ought to meditate often on the touching prayer of the little child who got the idea of walking his estranged parents down to the beach one fine evening; as he walked along the way with his father and mother on either side of him, silent and glum, mulling over their own sad thoughts, he said softly—but still loud enough for his parents to

hear—this little prayer of his own making:

> *"O my dear little God. I feel so bad because Papa is angry at Mamma! Oh, if You knew how bad I feel! Please make it so he won't be angry anymore, so I won't be afraid anymore and so these terrible things, which you know about, may go far away from me because I am just a little child. Make it that I can love Papa and Mamma again with all my heart, my whole heart all full, because You see, my little God when somebody is angry I feel too bad and I am too afraid and, then, You know I am just a little child! Amen."*

The Church is opposed to divorce, because it is an attack on the reality of love—and it is just that, for what is a love that is not indissoluble or the intimacies of marriage if they can be enjoyed with someone else during the lifetime of one's husband or wife; because divorce is the ruination of the family as Paul Bourget has the Jesuit Father Evrard explain in his novel *"A Divorce."* A boat happened to be at a port where one of the passengers wished to go ashore; there was an epidemic on board ship; no one was allowed to leave the boat. The particular individual was inconvenienced by it but the good of the society overruled. So too, it is much better that the home be saddened than that the family be sacrificed. The Church is also opposed to divorce because it brings nothing but unhappiness to the child.

The same is true when the divorce is not a formal breaking up of the family; it is enough for the parents to be at odds, to cause the child to suffer, and generally, quite intensely.

Charity to their children obliges the parents to try everything to reestablish their union which is jeopardized.

God bless the homes in which the arms of little children guard forever the close union between the father and the mother.

THE WOMANLY IDEAL

PERHAPS no one has more beautifully extolled the womanly ideal than Charles Peguy.

What he admired first and foremost in woman was her special faculty for putting soul into the daily humdrum of the eternal repetitions of everyday life in the home. He has Our Lord say:

> My love goes out to you, O most precious one To you, most submissive at the feet of destiny, Most subject to the masters of the feast, Most eager and most solicitous.
>
> I love you so much, O most earnest one, You who are most responsive to claims of work Most unknown and most glorious Most attentive to the care of the fold.
>
> The smallest action, the most ordinary, the most routine, though submerged in the greatest monotony of recurring days and engulfed by the unfolding centuries, can be of immense value if performed with a great love.
>
> You spend yourself utterly, O only needy one, In washing dishes and keeping house O Woman, you who set in order both labors and days.

But then, woman, is not only a worker, a housekeeper, she is a mother, a mother who is solicitous for her little ones, a mother who never tires of contemplating the infinite hidden away behind a curved forehead or stubborn eyes. Man does not sense it. He is not sufficiently delicate or spiritual for that. Woman alone

has a glance sufficiently keen and supernatural to discover not only the corporal needs of a fragile and tiny body but also the deep and innocent soul washed by the waters of baptism and rich with countless graces which must be put to good use in the future.

Nothing is so beautiful as a child falling asleep while saying his prayers, says God (according to Peguy) I tell you nothing in the world is so beautiful . . .

Yes, I tell you, I don't know anything so beautiful in all the world As a little child falling asleep saying his prayers

Under the wings of its Guardian Angel

A little child, who laughs at the angels while beginning to fall asleep

And who gets his prayers all mixed up because he no longer has his mind on them Who mixes up the words of the Our Father with the words of the Hail Mary

While a veil is already falling upon his eyelids The veil of night upon his sight and upon his voice.

Truly, it is woman's honor and her duty, as a consequence of her vocation, to be very near to souls and to the supernatural world. Then too woman is more loving than man. She has a sense of pity and compassion. She always has something in common with the sympathetic traits manifested by Joan of Arc even as a little girl. One day she saw two little starving and sad-hearted children walking along a roadway.

"It grieved me so much, I gave them all my bread, my noon-day lunch and my four o'clock snack. Their joy hurt me: I thought of all the other starving people who had nothing to eat, so many starving people, countless hungry people. I felt that I was going to break out weeping. I gave them my bread. A beautiful gesture! But they will be hungry again tonight; they will be hungry again tomorrow . . . There, they have gone into the future, into distress, into the anxiety for the future . . . O, my God, who will give them their daily bread?"

Joan's great compassion for souls tore even more at her heart than her anguish over the physical hunger of bodies. "If only we could see the beginning of Your reign established, o my Lord!" she prayed.

Honor to Woman for the greatness of her heart!

HER HUSBAND'S HELPER

PASTEUR's wife was a precious aid to the renowned scientist who was her husband.

The help she gave him was not always scientific, intellectual, or technical. In the organization of most homes, wives will not have to give their husbands only that type of help. Moral support is more essential.

It was a little home in which unity and understanding flourished but where money was scarce. The husband needed an auto for his work; he had an old jalopy and it had taken him three long months to pay for it. One day shortly after his last payment, the rear axle broke while he was turning a corner. The poor fellow returned home utterly discouraged. His wife who was courageous, confident, and furthermore expecting a baby, said not a word of reproach or discouragement. On the contrary she tried to console him saying, "Look, we are happy; God loves us. We ought to pay Him a little ransom for all the joys He

has given us. Come, let us pray and not lose hope. He can’t abandon us.”

Their hearts raised together to God, they found themselves more closely united than ever in their human love. Together they had drawn from the same Spring of Hope, the same Font of Goodness. They were united in perfect Unity.

It is clear that a wife ought to expect to find in her husband a strong man, someone who does not go to pieces at the first set-back; who knows how to struggle with the tempests and bring their bark safely into port. She certainly does not expect him to exhibit his virility by vain attitudes or a show-off’s behavior; she does not expect him to swagger or substitute boasting or protestations for ability to act, for solidity of character, and for real bravery. She naturally much prefers one who is truly a master, a master in his profession or in his work whatever it is, a master in the conduct of the home, able to make decisions and to assume responsibility. She wants no irresolute or timid chap who takes two steps back for every step forward or whose will is changeable, capricious, petty; nor does she want a man who gets submerged by details and forgets the whole, but a man endowed with an eye for detail coupled with a power for organization. She does not want a man whom prejudices blind and who is not sure of himself; no, she wants a man who can be resolute without being tyrannical, determined without being narrow and stubborn when a need arises for changing one’s tactics—a man of peace, of thought, and of perseverance...

What a list of virtues! Can they ever be found in one single soul? Let us suppose a man has the whole array of these virtues or even the principal ones among them, will he not even then need moral support at some time or other?

There are moments of discouragement, dark hours either because events bring sorrow and anguish or because nature grows weak or health fails or vigor of character temporarily subsides.

How helpful it is in these situations which are not at all impossible to be able to find reinforcement in the companion of his life! They started out as two but life together has made them one; each of them must support the other in view of their common work.

To each, the task is a true principle but when danger threatens, it is not too much to have to face the same threat together....

What security for the wife to know that she can find in her husband the help of which she dreamed! For the husband when he can be certain of being understood by his wife in periods of material or spiritual difficulty and not only understood but supported, cheered, and comforted!

> *Thank You, O my God, for giving me in my life-companion the intelligent, disinterested, attentive aide You knew I would need.*
>
> *You said, “It is not good for man to be alone.”*
>
> *You gave me another self. Help me to find in this other half of me, my other self, the strength to be strong.*

GOOD SENSE

A SISTER missionary describes the following family episode which took place in Congo:

Strong stalwart Bateke who had recently married came looking for me one morning with a very dejected

appearance, or perhaps, disgusted would be more correct.

“Well now, my friend, what’s the matter? Aren’t things going well? Is your wife sick?”

“Oh no, Sister, she’s not sick” (this in a very dry tone)

“What’s the matter then?”

“Ah, that one (meaning his wife), She doesn’t have any sense.”

“Nothing to eat! She’s always outdoors talking. Nothing is good in the hut. She needs . . .”

“Well, bring her here,” I interrupted to show myself willing to help.

“I will scold her and remind her of her duties.”

“Oh no, that’s not enough!”

“What then,” I asked slightly worried.

“That one, (still referring to his wife) ought to come here for at least a month to get a head on her shoulders!”

“All right! Bring her.”

The next day my Bateke came back pulling “that one,” who looked very sheepish, after him.

“How is it my daughter,” I asked her reproachfully, “that you don’t understand your new duties better? If you do not know how to keep house or prepare a meal for your husband, it would be better to come back with us for several days, maybe a month. Do you want to?”

“Oh yes,” she sighed.

“That is fine,” beamed the happy husband.

Obediently the young wife began her new apprenticeship to learn how to prepare good cassava and fish with oil dressing, the staple food of her lord and master.

Bateke came to see his recluse before the month was up.

“You can take your wife back now,” I offered, “she will be wise and capable from now on.”

“No, No,” protested the obstinate husband. “She must stay the thirty days.”

And at the end of thirty days, the couple was reunited. The last news of them was good. My Bateke is satisfied.

“That one has sense now.”

What is possible in Congo is scarcely possible among us. A husband cannot send his wife back to school for a course in Home Economics or back home to her mother to be instructed in her duties . . . As a consequence his home is run in helter skelter fashion. Nothing is ready on time, the food is spoiled, the clothing is not properly cared for, the bills are not paid, the accounts are not kept straight, the children are not dressed on time—there is general hubbub. How can there be peace in such a home where a woman has no sense?

Sometimes it is the man of the house who lacks sense. He manifests no business ability at all; wastes time and money; has no feeling for organization or sense of value; invests foolishly on the word of others and is an easy mark for wily and scheming confidence men. He is hesitant; can never make up his mind or if he does make a decision, he corrects it the next moment; begins everything but finishes nothing; undertakes a profession in which he expects to move mountains and work marvels only to abandon it several months later through lassitude or because he ambitions a career more to his liking and more lucrative.

This changing humor makes him choose one school after another for his children; none of them are ever exactly what he wants. Naturally the children suffer from it, they can't profit by their classes, lose out on grades, and are in danger of becoming changeable too.

For a man, above all the qualities of the heart can never replace solidity of the mind. He has to have a head on his shoulders, quick discernment, accurate knowledge, the power to decide, if not promptly in delicate matters at least always firmly, the ability to revise his decision when advisable and when the evidence demands it, because obstinacy has no value and reveals even more than indecision that a person lacks sense; but he must also have the power to hold his own against wind and tide, even when the odds seem against him, provided of course, that what he looks upon as opposition is not some difficult obligation of the moment he should be meeting rather than fighting.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

A WOMAN educator of note in her book, *"L'Education selon l'Esprit,"* expresses an opinion that deserves full acceptance. She says, "What is best for a young woman is not to be entirely absorbed in material works and the care of children but to keep a little freedom of time and of mind to continue her intellectual development. The gift she makes of herself to her own will be only the more precious; the services she will render them will be of a superior quality. She herself will be ennobled by these disinterested pleasures, defended against the temptations that are born of fatigue, boredom, and a barren interior life.

There are unfortunately some young women for whom this advice would be most difficult if not impossible to follow; they are obliged to work in the time they have free from family duties to provide for the necessities of life. But there are those who have leisure. That they ought to profit by it to cultivate their minds is quite evident.

The principal reason is the one already mentioned—to be able to give something of the intellectual riches they have acquired to their children later. One needs to know so many things to enlighten their young minds, to open up their little souls just at the threshold of life; their questions should be answered by something better than an irritable "Stop bothering me!"

Another advantage of growing in culture is that it helps one struggle against a sense of futility. Not that the thousand occupations demanded in a home are futile. But there are, over and above the essential things, a thousand little nothings with which one can fritter her time. That is the immense domain of the futile in which women flit about untiringly as a bird hops from bar to bar in its cage, a pretty bird of paradise.

But there is something worse than to be busy with little nothings and that is to do nothing. There is just a void, an exaggerated place left open for day dreaming—and the normal consequence—an open door for

temptation.

“Because what’s to be done in a home unless one dreams?”

If one does not apply the mind to serious and uplifting reflections, the devil will be right on hand to turn it to fantastic hopes: one relives stories read, reviews step by step girlish infatuations, ruminates over the imaginary or real deficiencies in her husband . . . Temptations are not far away!

Even if conscience preserves such a one from sin, she is always in danger of trouble, extreme sensitiveness and boredom from the drudgery of daily tasks.

Good reading, which elevates the soul and stimulates thinking, which supplements religious knowledge, puts one in contact with great souls, will inspire to virtue and produce wonderful effects in the individual.

At the present time when the apostolate must deal with so many problems, is it asking too much of the one who expects to do good to be highly competent? The religious renaissance must begin with the educated groups. Ideas will always rule the world.

What poverty it is for women, so devoted as they are to the apostolate, to lack ideas; to live only by routine! They have forgotten but one thing—to light their lamps!

ENDURANCE

ABBE PERREYVE wrote to a young man of twenty who had told him of his hopes to marry.

“Ah, my friend, next to the happiness of serving God in consecrated virginity, what is more beautiful than to link one’s life with that of a cherished woman; to share one’s whole soul, that is all his sorrows; to begin with her that brief pilgrimage on which there are so many joys and tears that there is scarcely time to do a little good? What is more worthy of an immortal soul than to give his love in youth to the soul he must love always and before God to purify the ardor of his desires by submitting them to the duties of fidelity and of paternity?

“Do not laugh at love as those foolish souls do who are incapable of it. There is no nobler word among men. Love is not the pleasure, not the selfishness of enjoyment; it is not the delusion of a brutal passion. The one who loves gives himself more than anything else. The highest degree of love is sacrifice. That is why he only knows how to love who immolates his rest, his joys, his fortune even life itself for the being he ought to love on earth and in heaven.”

Wherever marriage is seriously and correctly regarded the word sacrifice is part of its vocabulary. There is no doubt about it, marriage brings with it the sweetest of human joys that can be tasted on this earth; but it also involves self-abnegations that are essential.

The Countess of Adhemar wrote to Abbe Fremont, “Man and woman are united, not as they often believe with the best faith in the world, to give each other happiness, but, in reality, to seek it of each other. As their individual concepts of happiness may differ, there ensues for both of them a painful awakening.”

In that excellent bulletin, “Association du Marriage,” Chretien carried a fine article by an author who identified himself with the initials C.B. The ideas expressed in it have much to contribute here.

"Love is not a bargain, it is not even an exchange; it is a sacrifice which should always be mutual. Each giving up and sacrificing the best of himself so that the best of the other's self may live and grow.

"Clearly the great test is endurance. Oh, if only the honeymoon could last forever. But that cannot be. They must pass from blind love to clear-sighted love; time requires this transformation but "the line" is not easy to cross—it is not easy to go from the torrid to the temperate zone. They must protect themselves against being deluded about this.

"'Two young people go up to the altar for the beautiful nuptial ceremony,' writes Father Lacordaire, 'They bring with them all the joy and all the sincerity of their youth; they swear eternal love for each other. But soon their joy diminishes, fidelity stumbles, the eternity of their pledges is broken to bits. What happened? Nothing. Hour followed hour; they are what they were except for one hour more. But one hour is much.'"

The author adds it is true "outside of God."

To triumph over time, over its duration, over monotony, over the friction resulting from character differences which become more evident with time, a supernatural spirit is absolutely necessary; it alone is able to call forth sacrifice, persevering sacrifice inspired by love.

UNBEARABLE HUSBANDS

To a brother of his who was very impatient, Saint Francis de Sales could not refrain from saying one day, "There is one woman in the world who must be very happy."

"Who," asked his brother.

"The woman you might have married had you married."

Madam Acarie, a mother of six children was left a widow in 1613. She later entered Carmel taking the name Marie of the Incarnation. Her husband had been an unpleasant character and helped not a little to enrich her with the virtues that led to her beatification. Once in a rare spell of good humor he admitted, "They say she will be a saint some day; I shall have helped her become one; they will speak of me at her canonization."

Guy de Rabutin-Chantal, the father-in-law of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, who took the saint to his home after her husband's death was extremely hard to live with.

"He belonged to those well meaning and difficult old men who work efficaciously to make saints out of their women when they have in them the stuff from which saints are made," commented one of his biographers.

After the death of a celebrated philosopher, his wife obtained an audience with the king of Sweden. The latter inquired with kindly interest about the habits of the deceased. The wife, in a sudden outburst, exclaimed, "Your Majesty, he was unbearable!" A certain historian recording her remark added, "If all biographers were as sincere as that lady, they would be able to engrave her judgment on her pedestal of all the monuments raised to heroes."

Without accepting that opinion about heroes as our own—and admitting possibly that we are more willing to forgive them their foibles than others—is not the severe judgment on husbands a revelation of

not too good an opinion?

And we could extend the litany. Chaliapine relates that a Russian general of his acquaintance used to give way to terrible fits of temper at home. The life of the general's wife was a veritable hell. Happily one day she discovered a clever strategy. At the moment her husband's fury started to let loose, she dashed to piano and struck up the national anthem. Must we believe the marvelous results obtained? The general stood at attention; his anger cooled off.

Every woman can't have a general for a husband nor one so susceptible to harmony either. We know that music refines manners. How marvelous it can be on that point. But the best music for the wife in cases of this kind will be the music of silence.

Saint Monica's husband used to drink heavily and when he came home with insults on his lips or speaking unbecoming or unintelligible words the poor wife had to practice a patience that we can readily imagine. She answered nothing and waited until the storm passed to remind him gently and lovingly of the law of God. She won almost unhoped-for results, which testified to her sanctity: she obtained the complete cure of her husband who became a temperate and controlled man.

Is there anything obnoxious in me that brings sufferings into my home? I will correct it as soon as possible.

UNBEARABLE WIVES

YESTERDAY the men were on trial. The chapter on the ladies will be no less edifying.

"What you need," said a man to one of his bachelor friends who was disturbed by a vague nervous disorder, "what you need is a wife to share your troubles."

"But I don't have any troubles."

"That is all right. You will have them after you marry."

Such a story is not very expressive of esteem for marriage. Woman certainly has the power to console, but also the power to cause suffering.

The husband scolds, the wife gets angry. Does that make things any better? The husband, once the outburst is over forgets about it; not so the wife. She holds in reserve, unless she is very good, amazing desires for revenge. Moreover, she is argumentative.

"Look darling, look at the pretty bird that's with those two crows."

"Yes, I see, but there aren't just two crows, there are three."

"No, darling, look, there are only two."

"But I tell you there are three. It's always like that. I never have the right to be in the right."

And soon the tears drop from her lashes. Some women will pout rather than argue.

After a dispute that was of no great moment, a certain wife, pricked in her vanity, risked this imprudent threat. "If you don't yield to me, I won't talk to you for fifteen days."

The husband paid no attention and thought that after a short while life would settle down to normal again. But it didn’t. Silence. Silence.

She would not deign to answer his questions even those asked with the most angelic sweetness.

The husband, beside himself, came to a decision. He began to empty out all the cabinets and drawers, take the pictures off the walls, and was about to attack the drapes with a pair of scissors.

“What are you doing there?”

“I am looking for your tongue.”

Bursts of laughter restored peace. The pity is that the bursts of laughter had not occurred fifteen days earlier.

Tenacity has great worth. A woman probably has too much of it. She may expect to let it compensate for a certain strength she lacks. She realizes she is wrong because she is intelligent. She does not think she ought to yield because a miserable vanity gets in between her conscience and her decision.

It still remains that it is the woman in spite of her limitations and weaknesses who most often creates the happiness of the home and the man who spoils it.

The moralist was not wrong who said, “With all their faults, their perfidy, their subterfuge, their envy, and their lies; with their strong perfumes, their paint, and their powder; their imperfections; and their wretchedness, poor women are so much more courageous, more generous, more patient, more virtuous, more faithful than we men!”

Let each of the married partners judge himself or herself by his or her own conscience, and mindful of the happiness of the other, correct as soon as possible what might trouble the harmony of the home.

THE COUNSELS OF MADAME ELIZABETH

THE sister of Louis XVI, Madame Elizabeth, was a woman of fine psychological acumen and deep nobility of character. She gave this practical advice to one of her ladies in waiting who had recently married.

“Above all seek to please your husband . . . he has good qualities but he can also have some that are not so pleasing. Make it a rule for yourself never to concentrate on these and above all never permit yourself to talk of them; you owe it to him as you owe it to yourself. Try to look at his heart; if you truly possess it, you will always be happy. Make his house agreeable for him; let him always find in it a woman eager to please him, busy with her duties, with her children, and you will in this way win his confidence; when you once have that, you will be able to do, with the mind heaven has given you and a bit of cleverness, anything you wish.”

The outcome is interesting. Everyone knows it. “Man reigns but woman governs.”

“I will do it if God wills it,” said the husband of a rather dictatorial wife.

“Now you are talking nonsense,” said his friend, “why you haven’t even asked your wife’s permission.”

Woman instinctively, and above all when she loves, loves to be docile. Nothing costs her too much and at times she goes to the point of sacrifices extremely taxing for herself if her heart is captive. But at the

same time she loves to dominate.

The heroine of a comedy revealed, with exaggeration of course, a trait that is often found in woman. The said heroine had not yet married but she already was engaged in making her fiancée dance to her thirty-six wills and to goad him on with a thousand pin pricks saying, “I prick him, I make him go, I already treat him as my husband.”

Even when they are not so naughty, women by using to advantage their weakness and their charm usually succeed in making their husbands pretty much as they want them.

In his genially caustic style, Emile Faguet used to say, “Women are divided into three classes: those who are inclined to obey sometimes, those who never obey, those who always command.”

Let women never use their power for the egotistic satisfaction of their self-love. Let them rather have in view only God’s glory and, especially in the spiritual government of their home, let them know how to make God’s glory understood as it ought to be. They should be able to gain a hearing in the most vital matters when duty is at stake or when the worship due to God is involved; in other matters let them be ready to yield. They will purchase by their perpetual abnegation in these lesser things the right to be listened to in more important matters and their husbands will realize that when they do resist their wishes it is not because of vanity but because of virtue.

WOMAN, THE STRENGTH OF MAN

IS IT not often true in a home that “the strength of the man is many times in the woman.”

Man, who in principle at least and often in fact possesses physical resistance and moral energy, is sometimes singularly deficient; he hides under the appearance of strength an intimate need to lean on someone, to be led, encouraged, assisted.

Is it not also true that one great source of happiness in marriage is the reciprocal help the two give each other, the husband to his wife, the wife to her husband?

Joseph Proudhon from whom we would not expect such correct ideas, has given us some beautiful pages on the help that woman is called to give to her husband. He took for his theme the Bible text, “And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself.”

“Woman is a helper for man because by showing him the ideality of his being she becomes for him a principle of admiration, a gift of strength, of prudence, of justice, of courage, of patience, of holiness, of hope, of consolation without which he would be incapable of bearing up under the burden of life, of preserving his dignity, of fulfilling his destiny of bearing with himself.

“Woman is man’s helper first of all in work by her attentions, her sweet company, her vigilant charity. It is she who wipes his forehead that is moist with perspiration, who rests his tired head upon her knees, who cools the fever of his blood and pours balm into his wounds. She is his sister of charity. Ah! let her only look at him, let her season the bread she brings him with her tenderness: he will be strong as two, he will work like four.

“She is his helper in the things of the mind by her reserve, her simplicity, her prudence, by the vivacity and the charm of her intuitions.

"She is his helper in justice, she is the angel of patience, of resignation, of tolerance, the guardian of his faith, the mirror of his conscience, the source of his devotedness.

"Man can brook no criticism, no censure from man; even friendship is powerless to conquer his obstinacy. Still less will he suffer harm or insult. Woman alone knows how to make him come back and prepares him for repentance and for pardon.

"Against love and its entanglements, woman, marvelous being that she is, is for man the only remedy.

"Under whatever aspect he regards her, she is the fortress of his conscience, the splendor of his soul, the principle of his happiness, the star of his life, the flower of his being."

What praise for woman! What responsibility for her to be in her home, the fortress of conscience, almost a living translation of divine commands!

Let her strive to deserve this role by the solidity of her principles, the energy of her convictions, the convincing strength of her calm statements.

IS GENIUS CELIBATE?

CERTAIN authors have denied that woman is a help for man at least intellectually and often also morally. They claim that feminine contact and the demands of the home weaken the strong. The words of the physiologist, Garnier, "genius is celibate" have been capitalized on by some.

One of the great advocates of this thesis is Tolstoi, who did not hesitate fourteen months after his marriage to have one of the characters in his book, *"War and Peace"* say, "Never marry, never, my friend. That is my advice. Do not marry, at least not before you can say to yourself that you have accomplished the whole of your destiny before discovering woman such as she is. Otherwise you will be cruelly disillusioned. Marry when you are no longer anything but an old man, good for nothing; otherwise all there is of good and noble in you will perish; all will be spent in little things. Yes, if in the future you expect anything of yourself, you will feel that all is finished for you, except the parlor where you will be on the same footing as a court valet or a fool . . . My wife is an admirable woman. She is one of those rare women with whom one can be tranquil about his honor, but, my God, what would I not give not to be married . . . You are the first person, the only person to whom I say that, because I love you."

Tolstoi himself left his home to escape from this sad sensation of a missed life.

The part that is true about all this is that for certain individuals and in certain careers the choice of a companion for life is of paramount importance.

Ozanam, who was a professor at the Sorbonne, wondered if he would ever find the woman of his dream; not only someone who would love him, but someone who would understand him; be willing to see him buried in books and apparently neglect her to keep company with ideas; someone who in the intimate converse of conjugal life would not be silent, unintelligent, or unreceptive but capable of taking an interest in her husband's studies and even help him in his work.

Jean du Plessis de Grenedan, a marine officer, used to wonder if he would ever find the woman he hoped for; a woman who would accept the career of her husband and not melt into tears at every leave-taking as if her husband heartlessly went away to make her suffer; who would not, except for serious

reasons unbiased by whim, require him to give up going to sea and accept a land commission; someone who would not be depressed during his long absences.

Because of a too selfish idea of home-life, some women do weaken their husbands, hamper their vocation, their profession, or their apostolate. They have that type of jealousy that considers all that is not given to them as stolen from them. They are satisfied only if they can keep the chosen one of their heart always with them and have him constantly at their feet.

A wife should stimulate and encourage but never paralyze.

THE POWER OF A SMILE

THERE is in Rome not far from the basilica of Saint Agnes, which was built over the spot at which she was martyred, another church--Our Lady of Peace. It is more or less a custom for newlyweds to attend Mass here the day following their marriage; it is as if they realized that Mary's help is none too much to help them preserve peace in their homes.

Nothing so helps to preserve the mutual attraction husband and wife have for each other as cheerfulness, the habit of taking everything in good part, of keeping one's balance in the midst of disturbing circumstances, of bearing personal anxieties without letting them become noticeable, so as not to sadden the other. Nothing so quickly kills this attraction as nagging over little things, pettiness in any form, referring to the blunders of the other, magnifying some omissions, manifesting suspicion. The ideal of cheerfulness is to display as spontaneously as possible, without the least trace of effort an amiable gaiety ever ready to smile.

Wrangling, ill-humor, or simple sulkiness are the great enemies of homes. Particularly when these things have their source in the wife is there grave danger; for husbands may be tempted to seek outside the home and out of the path of duty the ray of sunshine they cannot find at home.

Little heed should be paid to imprudent comments on the part of neighbors and acquaintances, supposedly so well- meaning, who think they are rendering a service by revealing, confidentially of course, the goings-on of this one and that one. Little heed should be given to insinuations that are made sometimes without any foundation; they have a peculiar power to throw a gloom over the soul if they get a hearing. Peace is lost to the soul; someone's perfidy or inopportune truthfulness killed it.

No matter what happens keep your power to smile.

A certain wife was on the verge of despair; bits of gossip she picked up here and there and other evidence which she thought she discovered revealed to her that her husband was in love with another woman. This woman had been flitting about the unfortunate man; at first he pretended not to notice it; one day out of a sense of duty he actually put her in her place. But then, little by little, her persistence won out and he yielded ground. He was not far from actual betrayal of his home.

His wife, not knowing what to do, went to her confessor. The priest first put her through an examination of conscience. He asked, "Have you always in your home life manifested patience, no matter what happened; a joy that uplifts, a reserve that attracts, a calmness that inspires confidence?"

She had to confess that she had failed many times against these virtues. Instead of showing herself more attractive, she had allowed her wounded self-love—which could easily be understood— get the upper

hand; she did not hide her suspicious attitude and began to give way to little expressions of spitefulness. Such unwise tactics, instead of retaining her husband's loyalty, helped to strengthen the attraction of her rival.

"Act differently," the confessor advised her. "Learn to smile!"

A short while after, the husband in a moment of confidence confessed the risk he had run and revealed that the smile of his wife and her confident joyous spirit had saved him from the abyss. "I did not have the right to destroy such happiness, to annihilate a hope that was so evident."

Wives would do well to follow this very judicious advice: "Love your husbands as if you were sure of their hearts and act as if you still had to win them."

A DEVASTATING DISPOSITION

EVEN when a person has great desires for good he can fall far short of the program for holiness he dreamed of following; he lets himself slip into faults of speech or unpleasant attitudes—yes, unfortunately he may fall more seriously or come perilously near betraying his strongest obligations.

If then he finds himself constantly confronted with harshness, reproaches, a set face, he may perhaps drift farther away from his duty instead of being sorry for his negligence and failings.

He has a much better chance of getting back to the right path if he is met not with irritability and sharpness but with a receptive gentleness that announces and promises pardon without having to express it, yet is withal earnest and firm.

Does God deal otherwise with us? He tried throughout the Old Testament to adopt a severe manner and to brandish a threat, a plague or some other menace each time the Chosen People went astray. He realized that this was not the best way to lead His poor elect people back to repentance. He changed His formula, and modified His way with them.

Rather than hurl thunderbolts at them He offered His Heart:

"Behold this Heart that has so loved men!" What cruelty not to give any other return than ingratitude, contempt.

It is striking in the Gospel that Our Lord is not so much concerned about demanding our fidelity as He is about revealing His own. He does not say, "Here is how much you must love Me and the way you should love Me." No, but "Greater love than this no man hath."

"To such an extent has Christ loved the world," marveled Saint Paul—to such an extent! Do you understand? Christ reiterated His love and gave new proofs of His love much more than He expressed reproach.

There are few souls who can imitate this Christ-like magnanimity when they suspect or discover that someone has failed them. Yet we must all strive for it and aim at attaining the perfection of Christianity, the complete Gospel ideal.

Isabelle d'Este was forsaken to a certain extent by her husband, one of her biographers informs us. Did she shower him with reproaches? Did she send him upbraiding letters, violent literature? Nothing of the sort. With firm simplicity mixed with tenderness she wrote, ". . . I am very well. Your Highness must

not say it is my fault if I disagree with you, because as long as you showed me some love, no one could have persuaded me that you did not love me. But I do not need anyone to tell me to know that for some time Your Highness has loved me very little. However as this is an unpleasant subject, I shall cut it short and speak no more of it...”

Whether or not her husband returned to his duty after receiving this message is not so sure. There are some hearts that resist everything. At least his wife had chosen the best means to win him back.

MEN’S VIRTUES VERSUS WOMEN’S VIRTUES

MANY MEN, still victims of an old prejudice, are very demanding when there is question of the moral life of their wife or their fiancée, yet strangely indulgent with regard to their own moral life. It is taken for granted that the wife must be pure and remain pure; she must come to marriage as a virgin and preserve the chastity of her married state. What of the man?

It is significant that women too seem to expect men to act differently, and to accept this double standard, as the reaction of the young woman in the following incident indicates.

Her husband was guilty of a flagrant betrayal of their love and had been unfaithful almost from the beginning of their marriage. The poor girl was discussing the situation with her father-in-law who was incensed at his son and raged against him saying, “If he carries on like that he is a blackguard, a vile monster!” And the wife had no other comment to make than, “He’s a man!”

Questionable praise, we must confess, for the masculine gender!

Christian morality does not subscribe at all to such standards. There is no double standard: one type of morality for young men and one for young women; one for husbands and one for wives. That man has a stronger pull toward the physical is possible; that he may be bolder and less restricted by delicacy or timidity; that because of his profession he must leave home frequently and consequently have more occasion to forget his wife and as the ugly saying goes “have his fling” is very true. But none of these reasons justifies or authorizes his misconduct.

An author who plays up his native city in his writing does not refrain from criticizing, and justly, those respectable men—the seventeenth century called them persons of quality—who in their own city enjoy an honorable reputation, figure prominently in their parish church, entertain the clergy frequently, but the minute they have left their city, forget their principles, take their morals lightly, read sexy novels that they lay in store at the station if they can do so unobserved and think nothing of sharing their hotel room with a chance woman acquaintance.

Let us allow for the author’s satire and his outlook. But is it all false?

And when the little ragamuffin standing on the station platform heard the woman say to her departing husband, “Take care of yourself and don’t forget me,” wasn’t it just the impudence of the rascal that made him say to her smartly, “Don’t fret ma’am, he just tied a knot in his handkerchief!”

Out of sight, out of mind . . . May that never be true! Likewise may it never be said, “Out of sight, free from duty!”

MAN'S FIDELITY

THE tolerance with which some worldly people regard the irregularities of men is scarcely credible. That is none the less their attitude. Everything is permissible for men. They are to be excused because of their temperament. "Nature gets the best of them, isn't that true? We must understand them and not be over severe."

How refreshing it is to hear a woman repudiate such unwarranted indulgence and condemn as should be condemned the liberties the world accords men in the matter of marital betrayal. Isabelle Riviere gives us this satisfaction in *"The Bouquet of Red Roses."*

Agatha, the young woman in the story, picks up a volume of a contemporary writer; in the selection "The Evening With Mr. Teste" by Paul Valery, she came upon this opening paragraph:

"Stupidity is not my strong point. I have seen many individuals, visited several nations, I have taken part in various enterprises without liking them. I have eaten every day. I have gone with women."

She blushed with indignation and showed this last sentence to her husband. "I find that statement more vile than the worst obscenity."

"Why, my dear?"

"Such utter disregard of fidelity! That complacent way of regarding man alone as the center of the world, and regarding the whole world, women included, as objects for his use, as just so many accessories. Don't you find that disgusting?"

"Yes . . . I believe it is the negation of all truth, of all love in any case."

Bravo! Let this vagabond Mr. Teste claim if he will that stupidity is not his strong point. He certainly takes the prize for presumption and cynicism.

Granted that woman is more soul than man, and he more body than woman, more alive to the physical, that does not authorize him to do as he pleases with the law of God and the dignity of women. Certainly if he expects to remain faithful without taking the necessary means, he will hold out only with great difficulty.

Watch and Pray. Here is a man who exposes himself to every risk, who seldom if ever prays, who receives Holy Communion just at Eastertide or at very, very great intervals. Even if he has a high sense of honor and deep respect for woman's dignity, he will have great difficulty keeping his soul intact. We must not separate the demands of morality from the helps Our Lord gave us to observe them. To conform to the laws without having recourse to the helps is practically impossible. "Without Me," said our good Master, "You can do nothing."

What must we conclude then from the fact that man has greater difficulty than woman in preserving chastity? That he is free to dispense himself from chastity? Certainly not, but that he must pray more than his wife, practice more Christian prudence than his wife since he is more exposed to danger than she is both by his more vehement temperament and the occasions brought about by his business.

A WIFE WITH CHARACTER

PEOPLE say that husbands do not like too strong a personality in their wives. Doubtless there are some

sufficiently imprudent to prefer a simpleton or a doll, provided she is exteriorly alluring, to a woman of real worth who may prove to be someone to cope with. To such men, the otherwise incorrect but witty sentence might truly be applied, “Women know well that men are not so stupid as people believe, they are more so!”

In the history of Byzantium, an interesting incident is related. Queen Theodora had just come into power. Her son, the prince who would succeed her should have a wife. According to custom messengers were sent out to bring to the palace the twelve most beautiful girls they could find.

After the first elimination, six remained from whom the future emperor. Theophilus was to choose his wife. Holding a golden apple in his hand the prince began his review. He was much attracted by a certain Kasia and just for something to say, he paid her this dubious compliment, “It is through woman that all evil has come to us.”

“Yes,” retorted Kasia, “but also all good.”

Frightened by such quick reply, indicative of a quick temperament, Theophilus carried his golden apple to someone else. A splendid example of masculine stupidity!

Happily the time when men reasoned that way is past. Those who are intelligent want to find in the woman they choose for their wife a person who is a real person.

Not one of those blue-stockings, justly contemned by the truly wise, for forgetting the reserve that is the precious attribute of their sex, posing as intellectuals, acting mannish, using language which lacks refinement and foolishly aping masculine ways.

When women are not women, they are worse than men and they are ridiculous besides.

Man does not desire to find a duplicate of what he is when he looks for a companion! It is Eve that Adam desires.

But he wants an Eve who is not just a woman expert in trinkets and in whom veneer takes the place of mental and moral virtues; he wants an Eve who is an honest-to-goodness woman, and if possible, one of unusual character; one who can see the world otherwise than through the narrow dimensions of the ring she wears on her finger and does not concentrate all her attention on her jams and jellies or her next new outfit; a woman who thinks before all else of her home, but precisely because she wants her home to be attractive and she herself to be attractive in that home, seeks to enlarge her horizons and to be truly a real person.

PRAISEWORTHY VANITY

A HUSBAND who is a man of sense as well as a good Catholic proposes this question: Ought concern for their appearance be something foreign to Christian wives?

He answers the question himself saying, “That would be simply ridiculous. I confess that I feel thoroughly enraged when I see women who act as if they were being very virtuous by their slovenly appearance and poor taste in dress. First of all, they commit a fault against beauty and grace which are God’s gifts. But their fault is graver still: Have these noble souls taken care to consult their husbands and to assure themselves that he approves of this treatment? Let them not be surprised then if their husbands look elsewhere for satisfaction. Christian women must know that to dress with taste and even with

distinction is not a fault; that to use cosmetics is no fault either unless the results are esthetically to be regretted; that adornment as such is one of those questions of convention that is purely accidental and remains completely foreign to the moral order. Virtue owes it to itself to be attractive and even strongly attractive. The only thing that must be avoided is excess. There is excess when a Christian woman devotes all the powers of her mind to becoming as exact a copy as possible of the models in Vogue or Charm to the point of neglecting her duty. A woman who for love of dress would ruin her husband, neglect her children, or even refuse to have them for fear of spoiling her figure would fail by excess."

This viewpoint is full of wisdom; it defends right use and at the same time condemns abuse.

One of the most ordinary vanities of women is the desire to look young. Husbands are in sympathy with this trait especially when years have rolled over the home. All women need do is purify their intention so as not to offer sacrifice to vanity; they should avoid exaggeration, which makes them ridiculous.

They might just as well, for no one will be deceived except those who are willing to be deceived. The world is penetrating almost to the degree of the oculist described in the book, *"The World As I See It."*

This dignified gentleman, wise in the ways of the world, received his patient and listened sympathetically to her symptoms, asked the necessary questions, made his examination, and gave his verdict stating, "Well, it's plain, you have cataracts. It's not a disease, it's a sign of age. You told me you were forty-three. I wrote you down in my record as being forty-seven; but you have passed the fifty mark. Don't be disturbed by this."

If husbands have the right to demand that their wives try to keep themselves attractive, it is clearly evident that they in turn must do the same.

The wise advice to wives on the subject of personal appearance that was quoted earlier was followed by this equally judicious advice to husbands.

"They have a duty to avoid becoming absorbed completely by their professional concerns. They ought to show themselves not only eager to be in their wife's company but attentive, even loving, and that, whatever be their age. There must be no false modesty or self-consciousness here: a husband owes it to himself to merit each day the love of his wife. Is it right for them to be willing to make the solidity of their home rest solely on the sense of duty they assume their wife possesses? Don't they ever fear losing her love or do they imagine such fears to be restricted to lovers only? Do they then want to treat their wife less considerately than they would treat a mistress?"

Let husbands and wives in wise self-possession enjoy a happy, beautiful, and reverent liberty.

A DIRECTOR'S COUNSELS

IN HIS book, *"La jeune Mariee,"* Leon de la Briere quotes the advice given by a spiritual director to his penitent in the 14th century.

"You ought to be attentive and devoted to the person of your husband. Take care of him lovingly, keep his linens clean and orderly because that is your affair. Men should take care of the outside business; husbands must be busy going and coming, running here and there in rain, wind, storm, and sleet; they must keep going dry days or rainy days; one day freezing, another day sweltering, badly fed, badly lodged in poorly heated houses and forced to rest in uncomfortable beds.

“But they do not mind any of this because they are comforted by the hope that they will enjoy the care their wife will give them on their return.

“How pleasant the thought of taking of his shoes before a cheerful fire, of bathing, putting on clean clothes, fresh shoes and stockings; eating well prepared meals that are properly served; of being sheltered from the inclemencies of the weather; of being obeyed; of retiring to sleep between fresh sheets and under warm bed coverings; good furs.

“Remember the country proverb that says three things drive a man from his house—‘a house without a roof, a chimney that smokes, and an argumentative wife.’”

“Therefore, my daughter, I urge you to be gentle, agreeable, and good-natured in order to keep in the good graces and the love of your husband.

“Then all the while he is busy, he will have his mind and his heart directed toward you and your loving service. He will abandon every other house, every other woman, every other service. It will all be as so much mud compared to you.”

Some very definite virtues are needed to follow out such program:--a very high degree of pure intention to accomplish in a supernatural spirit the thousand little attentions required by human love; a deep seated charity that becomes more active and more vital by the tender affections of the heart for the beloved; a habit of order which has a place for everything and everything in its place; skill in home-making, that essential feminine talent of making a house a home, cheerful and agreeable, a warm and pleasant nest, and the desire on the part of the wife to make as many things as she can herself.

At the beginning of married life love alone without any special attraction toward renunciation makes such a harmony of virtues a possible achievement.

However, there comes a time in many homes when the spirit of renunciation must come to the rescue of love. Not that husband and wife no longer hold any attraction for each other, but they know each other too well to be under any delusions regarding their insufficiencies and they have to be able to pass over many imperfections. It is helpful for them under such circumstances to recall that marriage is a sacrament whose particular grace is to help the wedded couple live their life together.

Honest observers of Christian marriage recognize this: Catholicism has worked a great wonder, “it has succeeded in steadying the vagabond and insatiable sexual urge, it makes long cohabitation possible, it makes characters more supple and tempers dispositions; through constant effort and the joy of duty accomplished, it increases the moral worth of the individual giving meaning thereby to life and to death; it gives to society the most solid support upon which it can stand.”

FRIENDLY ARGUMENT

JUST as bickering, sulking, and domineering opposition should be avoided by husbands and wives, so too, free and friendly discussions should be encouraged as an aid to bind their souls in a closer union. Strife and rivalry motivated by self love is one thing, but sane and cordial disagreement or exchange of ideas is quite another. It is from the clash of ideas that light shines forth. And also warmth.

Writing to a young married couple, Bishop Dupanloup said to them, “You were both astonished the first time I recommended argument to you—friendly argument—and still more astonished when I answered

your statement, ‘we shall never argue,’ with the comment ‘So much the worse for you!’”

“The truth is that in a society so intimate, so constant as marriage, if you do not feel free to discuss and even to engage in friendly argument, it is evidence of constraint between you; there is something which is preventing the free expansion of your souls.

“These little disagreements founded primarily on the affectionate observation of your mutual failings will not alter the peace of your home in the least; on the contrary, I believe that they will establish in it a more profound peace and more intimate union, because they will assure both of you of your reciprocal confidence.”

Actually, as it is easy to see, the bishop was advising his spiritual children not so much to argue as to discuss. And if one insists on using the word “argument” it must be modified by the word “friendly.” Then let them go to it!

Saint Louis was conversing one day with Queen Marguerite. She was complaining that the king did not have enough pomp in court functions and that he himself did not dress with the magnificence befitting official ceremonies. He thought, on his side, that the queen was taking some advantage of her position and that she gave way to excess in the richness of her dress.

“Would it really please you if I dressed more magnificently?” asked the king.

“Yes, I so wish you would.”

“Very well then, I shall do so, because the law of marriage urges the husband to try to please his wife. But since this obligation is reciprocal, it is only right that you should conform to my desire.”

“And what is that?”

“That you get into the habit of dressing as simply as possible!”

Well done! In friendly arguments such as this, charity as well as finesse and courtesy scores its point.

Don’t think you must always be right. You ought to defend your point of view but you should not be hostile to the opposite viewpoint just because it’s the opposite viewpoint and before you ever begin to discuss. Two minds are better than one—unless of course they’re two negatives.

If the other person is right or it is better for the sake of peace to pull down your flag, then give in graciously and without bitterness.

FEMININE FAULTS

WOMAN has a lively imagination; that is an asset. It can, however, soon become a fault; she readily builds up fanciful notions, and because an object is pleasant and flatters her taste, she seizes upon it as something worth having, confounding the attractive with the good, and salves her conscience with this false sense of value.

A critic could say with no little truth, “Every woman has three lives—a life she endures, a life she wants, and a life she dreams about; the first is made up of the things she does despite the fact they do not please her, the second is made up of the things she does because they please her and the third, of the things she doesn’t do either because she can’t or because even while desiring them she does not actually want

them."

The third trait is the most interesting—this dream-life is the one that occupies woman the most. She plots situations to suit her fancy in which through the power of her imagination she is the heroine. The result is that she chafes at the impossibility of actually achieving what her imagination conceives or her sensibilities evoke.

Man, being obliged to plunge himself into things, to lose himself in occupations which if not more engrossing than home-tasks are at least more evident as to their consequences and much less conducive to meanderings of the imagination, is more given to hard-headed realism. He is in danger of living too much in the prosaic and of lacking verve; woman is generally not lacking in verve, but she easily lands in the stars for riding a myth.

Further, man, unless he is born talkative—and then he is truly obnoxious—is much less tempted to loquaciousness than woman. Knowing better than woman how difficult it is to be informed and being unwilling to talk unless he is informed, he is more discreet, less discursive; woman, less impressed by the necessity of being well-informed before speaking, begins by talking; she learns later.

Since woman's intuitions are much more rapid, she manages to talk on almost any subject without knowing much of anything thoroughly; it is a wonderful help to speak with ease because she is not hampered by the difficulty of being exact.

In addition woman has greater zeal, she is more apostolic, she has proselytizing in her blood. When Our Lord wanted to evangelize Sichem, it was a woman he sent—the Samaritan woman. And the work was well done; she quickly told her friends and acquaintances—all the people of the little village—what she had said to Jesus and what Jesus had said to her, even the admonition He had given her "Thou hast said well, 'I have no husband,' for thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

The love to talk is so strong in a woman that she does not hesitate to speak evil of herself to satisfy it.

Some cynic credits these cruel words to a child. Sympathetic friends asked the little one what his father's last words were. He said, "Papa did not say any last words; Mamma was with him to the end." It is too clever to be true.

It is a well known and incontestable fact that there are many women who possess exquisite discretion. Indeed, if men were not also inveterate talkers, would they find so much occasion as they do to speak unkindly of women?

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A MOTHER

FRANCOIS MAURIAC gives us a keen analysis of a phase of maternal psychology, saying, "So did our mother appear to me: a creature above all creatures . . . It is strange to think that the most mediocre women and even the most wicked have been in the eyes of their little boy this almost divine being.

". . . The child must grow, withdraw from his mother; it requires separation for him to judge this creature of whom he was born. It is necessary for her to let this man, her son, try his luck, take risks, love a woman and take her to himself. All that seems simple and in keeping with the wish of nature. Yet, it is just that which gives rise to a drama more often than one would think.

“. . . The hen drives away the grown chick who persists in following her but many women do not have that instinct. In their son, they never see the child die; and this graying man that they wait on, that they scold, is still a little boy to them.”

Further on he says, “As we advance in life, we perceive that man in his declining years has as much need of his mother as when he was a child. In truth, the child in us never dies; as soon as sickness attacks us and disarms us, the child is there again, that demanding child, who needs spoiling, confidence, who wants to be consoled and cradled. And that is why very often, the wife from instinct becomes a mother again at the bedside of this sick man; she assumes for the man whom weakness has reduced to a child the role of the mother who is no longer there.

“Such is perhaps the greatest marvel of the feminine heart—the intermingling of maternal and conjugal love within it, so fused into one that there remains only this tenderness of the wife bending over her wounded and suffering companion; this tenderness of which poor Verlaine dreamed when he wrote these two lines.

“How I am going to love you, beautiful little hands
Clasped for a moment, you who will close our eyes.”

Coleridge has said it well.

A mother is a mother still the holiest thing alive.

Unhappily, what has contemporary society not done to “kill the mother.”

In how many places, children are said to belong to the State; they do not even have to take the name of their parents; mothers are merely the material producers of the living persons which the country, the factories, and the army need. Their generative organs are considered. Their heart, not at all!

In other places maternity is so ridiculed that to have a family, particularly a large family, instead of being a glory, is an evidence of simple mindedness, old-fashioned ideas, and stupidity.

Again, selfishness has been developed to such a point that while sterility may not be directly advocated, an immoderate limitation of births has been effected. To be tied down with children! No, thank you!

Before the war, Mauriac justly commented, “Everything takes place in the world as if there existed a leader of gambling, a leader of the ball who feels that to fulfill his designs he must first of all strike at the mother.”

And these last lines have become more timely than ever:

“In the world that it will be necessary to reconstruct, effort will have to bear upon this aim: to restore woman to her true place, to give her back her essential mission.”

COURAGEOUS MOTHERS

EVERY woman, by the fact that she becomes a mother, is courageous, at least in regard to all that concerns her children.

She does not consider the trouble it is for her to watch at their bedside, to take care of them, to feed them, to help them; and if danger ever threatens them she will brave any peril to save them. Our Lord’s

example of the mother hen gathering her chicks under her wing is touching and at the same time far below the realities of maternal psychology.

Sometimes this courage grows to unbelievable force. It is enough to recall many instances of this during the war.

Times of peace are not without their examples. Here is one that is profoundly beautiful:

At a certain high school located by the seashore, several students who had gone out for an afternoon of swimming were drowned despite the vigilance of the instructors. With which family should the faculty begin to break the bad news? One mother whose son had been killed in the war of 1914-1918, lost two boys in this tragedy. She had a profound faith, a valor without equal. The Father Superior knew her. He would begin with her.

She was admirable. Standing before the two beds, she uttered no complaint, no reproach. The priest wanted to thank her for her delicacy in the face of such grief.

But how was he to inform the other mothers?

"I will go," she said immediately. "They will not be able to say anything to me, for I have lost two."

When misfortune strikes someone belonging to me, do I manifest the same serenity, the same supernatural spirit? In the course of a pilgrimage from the North of France to Lourdes, a poor child had to be taken off the train at Poitiers. His mother and he were going to petition Our Lady for the cure to his malady, which was in its last stages. Mary doubtless thought it better not to let this poor child on earth any longer. Shortly after the train left Tours, he died. At the Poitiers station the waiting room was quickly arranged to receive him. The mother remained near the body of her little one while the necessary preparations were made. She was not weeping, she held the child on her knees, she was praying. "You would think it was Our Lady of the Seven Dolors," whispered a sympathetic onlooker. It was true. She was not upset by the going and coming; she was absorbed in her suffering or rather she was dominating it; there was no outburst, no sobbing; she was praying. It was as if a halo of holiness surrounded her.

In sorrow it is not necessary to parade an impassibility that does not belong to earth. Our Lord wept over Lazarus. But it is essential to rise above the pain, to supernaturalize it; not to let it crush us; to understand through our tears that God is always good, and that if He makes us suffer, it is not to break us but to lift us up, to let us share His Calvary, to give us the means of sharing more richly in the Redemption.

> O my God, I offer You my poor heart ravaged, bruised, and aching. Crucified Jesus, help me in my crucifixion.
> I unite my tears with the Blood of Your wounds.
> May all serve for the good of my dear ones,
> For souls, for all souls.

COURAGEOUS FATHERS

IF MOTHERS with a profound faith can give evidence of a courageous zeal, fathers animated by solid religious principles can also offer examples of singular magnanimity.

A young Jesuit who had come from a large family was stricken with a sudden fatal illness. Hurriedly his

parents were sent for. When they arrived their boy was already in his agony and died before their eyes.

As soon as he had gasped his last breath, the father knelt down and leaning toward his wife asked, “If you will, dear, let us recite the Magnificat that God called our boy to religious life and that He took him at the age of Saint Aloysius.”

Pierre Termier, the famous Christian geologist had a son. One day, the boy who was then fourteen years old, came home from school in gay spirits. He took the elevator to go to their apartment. There was an accident on the way up and the boy’s head was badly crushed, causing instant death. The mother was overcome with grief. Her husband said to her, “Believe sincerely, my poor wife, that if God asks such a sacrifice of us, it is not for the pleasure of making us suffer, but for the eternal happiness of our child.”

In how many homes where death has come because of the war has God been able to admire heroic resignation like this and superhuman joys in trial!

Assuredly, the designs of Divine Providence are mysterious. Why, why have all these young lives been snuffed out before they were able to attain virtues or enjoy the achievements of maturity? There is doubtless the possibility for expiation; who will ever know the power for reparation that all these holocausts will have in the life of a people called to offer them?

Then too there are individual reasons. How do we know what would have become of so-and-so or such a one among the young men of our acquaintance if they had lived? Being mortal, they have died. Too young, no doubt. But who knows if this death in their youth has not assured their eternity? We judge as the world judges—the only precious thing seems to be life on earth. Really the only precious thing is eternal happiness. Perhaps many of these youthful dead, had they lived in our world of sin, mingling with sin, would have lived in sin and died in sin. Is it not better, a thousand times better that they should have fallen at twenty in a magnificent act of generosity than to fall later at fifty or sixty with hell facing them?

Without even mentioning hell, what do a few years more bring to life if they must be passed—let us suppose they have been so passed—in spiritual insignificance and moral poverty?

To leave, if leave they must, is it not better that it be in beauty and in the exercise of heroic courage?

To be sure these noble thoughts cannot suppress the sufferings of fathers or of mothers. But in whatever situation we may be or whatever trial we must endure ought not faith always animate us? God never permits evil except that good may come. That is the truth we heard Pierre Termier recalling to his wife before the dead body of their son. I must tell it to myself in every trial and especially when faced with the bereavement of a dear one’s early death.

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord;” that is how saintly Job spoke.

That is how I want to speak in my turn.

A MOTHER’S ZEAL

A MARRIED woman, the mother of a family, writes, “I do not lack zeal; it is ardent, but is it well understood? I should like to lead all men to be good, virtuous Christians, but my position offers me so few occasions to put my zeal to work.”

Is it really true that a wife, a mother, a woman who stays at home has so little opportunity for the apostolate?

There is first of all the good she can do her children by simply being near them and letting the flames of divine love which she nourishes within her soul penetrate them. Anyone who loves God and is eager for the salvation of his brethren cannot ever hide the inmost concern of his soul—this desire to glorify God as much as possible and to cooperate with his best effort for the sanctification of the world.

To practice the devotion of duty faithfully performed is not less efficacious than a more spectacular apostolate. To manifest by one's example that the Will of God holds first place, that caprice counts for nothing, and that true happiness is in faithful, generous, fervent service is an apostolate in itself.

To bear witness to a great religion before the children calls for zeal. The mother quoted before seems aware of this. She says, "To unfold religion to them as a vast system, which it really is, a system which envelops nature and humanity to unite them to God, cannot but give them a desire to know it."

So many educators and so many mothers fail miserably in this; they teach the children a religion without breadth, a religion which instead of delighting them repels them. That of course is the result of their not having sufficiently profound and sufficiently broad religious knowledge themselves. They have perhaps never read since they left school, no longer studied religious problems; they are satisfied to use their meager equipment into which erroneous ideas may have slipped and as a consequence they are incapable of answering difficulties or even imparting any enthusiasm to those with whom they speak.

Then there is the apostolate than can be exercised at home. Many wives regret that their husbands have not advanced farther religiously or that they are remiss in the practice of their religion generally because of a lack of intellectual Christian training.

Let them do all they possibly can to help their husbands and count on God to do the rest.

"I count on my daughters," continues the woman quoted before, to accomplish a task that I have barely begun although I believed I was working at it. Let them pray often for their father that God may enlighten him on the important obligations of Christianity, that the world and its prejudices may quietly withdraw from his soul in order to let the true light shine in it with full splendor. Charles is good, fundamentally good; it seems to me that the uprightness of his heart, his excellent qualities call for a more perfect understanding of the truth. He has good will, respect for religion, esteem for virtue but he does not have within himself all the resources necessary. It is not his fault. God will doubtless accomplish His work and my children will have the consolation of seeing their father become a good and perfect Christian; it is the desire of my soul."

And what about home-life? Is there no room for improvement? It is difficult, generally unwise to preach. The same holds true in regard to the circle of relatives, friends, and visitors who are often at the home. But a beautiful testimony of the Christian Faith in daily living will win hearts.

Is this not a very extensive field for apostolic zeal?

DOMESTIC HELP

A RECENT book on marriage is filled with splendid suggestions for happy home-life. One of its most interesting chapters is entitled "Those Who Help Us." It glorifies the domestic personnel, those who

despite the beautiful derivation from the ancient word prefer now to be called the help.

It is clear first of all that their reason for existence is not that their employers have a right to lead a lazy life because the help dispense them from working. Those who secure help for themselves must work as well as their servants. Since the demands of motherhood or of education for the mother or father, or professional duties outside the home constitute heavy obligations which will not leave time for all the housework too, it is easy to understand that they will call in helpers.

The ancient Latin word, *famuli*, which was used to designate the servants who shared the life of the family, *familia*, strikes the right note. Hired help should not be slaves in the service of hard and overbearing idlers; they are an enlargement of the family for a common task in which all hearts and all activities performed together form but a single unit, with each person in his proper place, but in intimate cohesion with the rest, or ought we not say, "intimate communion" with the rest.

Thanks be to God, we can still find employers who do consider their servants in this light and also servants whose spirit of charity makes their task if not always easy at least always loved, servants for whom it is an honor to serve.

In reality, masters of the house as well as hired help have the duty to serve. The useless have no place at all in Christian society. Saint Paul says that they who do not work have no right to eat. But the same kind of service is not required of all. In an army, there are those who fight on the front line, those who transport food supplies and munitions, those who prepare the ammunition behind the lines or spend themselves in the numberless tasks the country needs done. All contribute to the good of the whole.

To serve in the more humble positions requires a greater virtue, above all when this service requires subordination to those who have authority; we will never praise those too much who accept the employment of serving others, not with jealousy in their hearts and only because necessity forces them, but with humility and charity.

Those who are obliged to have domestic help ought to hold them in high esteem. They would of course fail in their duty if they let each one have his own way in the running of things; in domestic society as well as in every other society, there must be authority to be respected.

Employers must not demand tyrannically more than is fitting; they should give sufficient recompense for the services rendered. They need not think they have fulfilled their whole duty just because they pay a just wage; in a family all have rights, each one according to his position has a right to the affection of all. Employers who are parents must insist that their children be respectful to the help. The help should be invited to live in the atmosphere of the home and while high moral standards must be required of them they should be allowed liberty in their religious life.

A family is a domestic community. The zeal of all must be aroused for the well-being of each and in such a way that God may be glorified to a maximum degree in this nest where the great rule is understood to be not the code of the worldly spirit but the peaceable demands of the Gospel.

LOVE OUT OF BOUNDS

HERE is a married individual who has not found in marriage all that marriage seemed to promise or here is one who so far has had perfect happiness. But one fine day there comes into the picture the perfect creature, the dream person—the ideal.

Oh, to be sure, there is no thought of renouncing one's home, but one dreams of a friendship of a very special kind . . . intellectual exchanges . . . There will be bodily separation but as high a degree as possible of soul union. They do not wish to fall. They will not fall. Is such a noble friendship forbidden?

A noble friendship is certainly not forbidden. But is that the case we are considering or is it not rather a dangerous friendship of which we speak? When beauty—let us suppose it is not just an imaginary ideal—does not coincide with the good, can there be anything else possible but seduction and fatal risk?

After all, have you not promised to another the entire gift of yourself. Love does not consist only in the material gift of the body but also and still more in the gift of the soul and of the heart. What then does this mean? Do you think you can divide the divine arrangement? Reserve for your marriage partner the traditional gift of your flesh while you are withdrawing the very part that gives honor and dignity to this tradition—your interior affection and fidelity.

Your partner in marriage has a right to your whole being. The day of your marriage you indicated no division; therefore you are in contradiction to what you have promised, to what God demands and to what your partner expects. Would either of you have accepted the other if you thought the endurance of the bond was based on whim and that an essential reserve was contemplated? Does not marriage involve at one and the same time the body and the heart. There can be no thought then of a simple material fidelity.

Reverse the roles. The temptation which you are experiencing— because it is a temptation and a sly temptation at that—is not experienced by you but by your partner. What would you think of giving in to it then? Would you be willing to accept the situation for yourself that you are tempted to impose on your partner?

You say "we shall never go so far as to be intimate." Are you sure? How can you guarantee that after a primary infidelity you will not fall into a secondary infidelity? And what assurance against surprise have you? If you boldly walk up to danger, do you believe divine grace to be obligated to save you in spite of yourself? How many who like you claimed to be strong and sure of themselves have fallen! All the sins of infidelity in marriage begin like this.

Surely if at the first attack, this perverse love would reveal all its batteries the noble soul would revolt. But it doesn't. It ingratiates itself, slipping in decorously and gently. Patience! It will turn sensual and you will be tricked!

Besides, suppose you do keep your senses in control, are sins of action only to be condemned? What of sins of thought? Of desire? Our Lord said, "that anyone who even looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

But you say, I shall accept only what is elevated, noble, in this friendship. So you say. But that you will not do because it is practically impossible. Let us just admit your hypothesis for the sake of discussion. All right, it is true for you. Is it true for the other person? Can you say positively that your imprudence will not arouse in him or in her troubled thoughts and desires? You are not an Archangel; the other person is no Seraphim. Well then? . . .

No! no! Away with lies and false reasoning! Lord, put order into my love. Grant that I may love only according to Your law.

THE FOLLY OF LOVE OUT OF BOUNDS

I HAVE meditated on the ethics on this kind of love. Now I shall consider a few examples of its consequences to convince myself of the right attitude if by chance I still need convincing.

Countess Potochka relates in her memoires that during the occupation of Poland by Napoleon she paid too much attention to a young French officer.

Her words are interesting. "Faithful to my duties, I would not even consider the possibility of a sentiment that I should have avoided and I contented myself with denying the danger." How many in similar circumstances do just that!

"It seemed permissible to me," she continues, "to entertain friendship for a man who possessed all the qualities one would have desired in a brother."

She emphasizes the next point, and it is a current delusion. "I forgot—and this was the greatest of my wrongs—that a young wife ought not to have any other confidant, any other friend than her husband. But then, why did not my husband make me remember it?"

If women can profit by meditating on the whole text, men ought to memorize the last line of it. It is unfortunately only too true that the infidelities of many wives have as their explanation, let us not say excuse, an initial fault on the part of the husband. Likewise the failings of many husbands in regard to marital fidelity have been prepared for at least by the bungling of their wives. Some men and some women try to justify their conduct on the basis of their particular situation.

"We are no longer in the ordinary conditions of marriage. We live fraternally and are consequently more free in our interior life since we have found through experience that a union of souls between us is not possible. . ."

There is only one answer to such a statement. Even when by mutual consent, because of a lack of soul-union, husbands and wives live without practicing bodily union, they still have no right to infidelity of the heart. Such infidelity, in addition to being against God's law is opposed to the divine institution of the family.

I saw in the preceding meditation how it is against the law of God. How is it against the divine institution of the family?

The family is a couple and not an assembly of three persons. "They shall be two in one flesh."

To yield themselves to a passionate love outside of marriage can only augment and accentuate the distance between the husband and wife and introduce an element of damnable licentiousness. And if this new love does not satisfy you, will you have recourse to a third, a fourth? Where will you stop?

Throw away your novel and start living your duty! It is austere perhaps, but it brings its reward with it. Never will an upright soul find peace and happiness in a love that his conscience condemns, that it cannot do otherwise than condemn.

THE PRAYER OF THE MARRIED

OF PRIME importance to the married is their prayer together—that precious time in which the two souls united by the sacred bonds of marriage fuse their aspirations, thoughts and desires, forgetting to

discriminate which are their own individually and present themselves to God, each mindful of the other, offering themselves in a unity that is continuously strengthened by a mutual love which increases tenfold every day.

Then when God has sent newcomers to the home, there will be prayer in common, each of the little tots and each of the older children will join in the prayer of father and mother and all will recommend to Our Lord the sanctification of the whole assemblage.

If ever circumstances such as war, travels, duties of state require a temporary and perhaps periodic separation, there will be the prayer said at a distance by each of the two hearts torn apart by the good-byes of parting and the prolongation of the absence—a prayer in which each under the eye of God strives to live together the same moment of life and pleads for the courage to continue the trip in unison to heaven.

Nor is any of this kind of prayer prejudicial to solitary prayer; when one of the two is engaged in the duties of his state or in some apostolic activity, the other more drawn to prayer, can in the silence of the soul seek to acquire from God for both of them and for the whole family, opportune graces. Prayer at such times will not only be prayer of petition but even more—an elevation of the soul to God to adore Him, to keep the Good Master company. There will be few words or specific reflections, but a gift of the heart, a search for union through intimacy of the soul. Or when one participates in the Liturgical prayer of the Church, there will be union of heart with the whole Church, a warmer and more fervent share in the Communion of Saints. The soul at the center of the world joins in the Sanctus of the numerous Masses that are being celebrated, and shares in the Great Prayer of Christ for the world.

There remains another form of prayer, the conjoined prayer of the parallel union of their two lives, not through any words or special acts, but by the consecration to God of the deeds of all their days, the wife at home, the husband in his office, or store, or shop.

"Pray always," said Our Lord. He did not mean that we must necessarily be always in the act of praying but in a state of prayer, which means to so act that one's whole life rises as a prayer because of the offering made of it to God and frequently renewed. The state of prayer is the state of elevation, the explicit or implicit gift made to God of all the minute particles of each instant's activity.

Toward the end of his life, Saint Francis de Sales, overwhelmed by the occupations of his ministry and the responsibilities of a large diocese thought he was obliged to curtail somewhat his extra prayers of devotion. "I am doing," he explained, "what is the same thing as praying."

Mental prayer and vocal prayer are not always possible to the same degree for all, although all must assure themselves of at least the minimum, as the vital prayer of maintaining union with God.

PRAYER TOGETHER

IF Our Savior's words, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am in the midst of them," apply to strangers and persons indifferent to one another, how much more significant they are for two beings destined to be but one heart and one soul!

No society can better draw down the graces of God through prayer than the society of man and wife. Already united by so many bonds, what a truly community-union does their conjoined prayer effect!

General Reibell, who was asked to write the preface to a World War book, took leave to strike this personal note.

“There are two habits to which I remained faithful during our expedition: I kept a diary of each day’s events and the reflections they aroused in me; then I read a chapter of the New Testament and a selection from the Imitation in the order my wife and I had agreed upon before parting; in this way we prepared a meeting place for our intimate thoughts across the distances that separated us. If, as happened on rare occasions, I was obliged to neglect this double obligation for a day or two at the most, I made up for it the following days, bringing myself up to date both in my journal and in my reading. When I completed the reading material, I began over in the same order as before until the end of the double set of three hundred sixty-five days of our African campaign.”

The husband in this case is the one who took the first step. Frequently the lead in the spiritual is taken by the wife. Often husbands are grieved to the depths of their being because they see that their wives do not draw the family to God.

Whether the husband or the wife takes the initiative matters not so much; what does matter is that a Christian family should advance spiritually to the degree of performing together the essential acts of religion.

There will be times when real necessity obliges husband and wife to fulfill certain religious exercises separately; for example, if the wife is nearing the time of her delivery or has just given birth to a child, or if for domestic reasons they must attend different Masses so that someone can be home to take care of the personnel or watch the children . . . Aside from such cases, it is desirable that they should perform as many of their spiritual duties as they possibly can together; theirs is to be an association. Let them pray together beside their bed, exchange intimate thoughts after an inspiring and spiritual reading done together, say grace before and after meals together and so on through the other opportunities for prayer in their life.

One of the two may have a greater taste for prayer than the other and there is no reason why it should not be satisfied, no reason why the claims of grace and the attractions of the soul should not be followed after the spiritual exercises that should be done together have been fulfilled; duty of state must always come first, must be safeguarded.

In this way independence of soul is assured along with close cooperation, in a worship by two with souls united.

PRAYER FOR EACH OTHER

A FATHER and a mother willingly pray for a son in danger, a sick daughter, or a child in distress. But not so frequently do husbands and wives pray for each other. Yet that would be the way they could most easily obtain the graces necessary to achieve their common desires and fulfill their common mission.

How beautiful it would be if, during their evening prayer together, there could be a pause such as the one for the examination of conscience during which time each would pray silently for the other, recommending to God all the other’s intentions sensed, guessed, and known as well as those that only God the Master of consciences could know.

Even more beautiful would it be if they would receive Holy Communion together frequently so that each

of them could speak more intimately to Our Lord about the needs of the other, begging not only temporal but spiritual favors for this cherished soul.

Cana Conferences are becoming more widespread. Here both husband and wife listen to the same discourses, make the same meditations and are called upon to form the same resolutions. They are not expected to make their retreat as two married celibates but as a couple together, to be sanctified conjointly.

They will in their Cana Conferences experience at times no doubt a little sly joy—quite pardonable to be sure—at hearing the very things they have been trying to convince their partner of, stressed energetically by a qualified speaker and with every chance of being effective since at such times the soul is more receptive.

They both become compromised in the eyes of the other; neither has any excuse in the future for going off on a tangent.

A further advantage of Cana Conferences is that the couple can more easily advance in holiness if their striving after it is synchronized. In many homes, the wife can manage to slip away for an annual retreat that has become habitual for her while the husband according to his reasoning can never find the time for these periods of recollection. As a consequence, there is a sort of spiritual cleavage between them. They do not advance equally with the consequent danger that to one the piety of the other may seem too rigid or too absorbing.

Let the wife, have, if she will, her additional practices of devotion to supplement the couple's united prayers; if she is intelligently pious they can only serve for the good of the home. But it remains true that her efforts ought to be directed less to surpassing her husband in spiritual exercises than to elevating his spirituality to the heights of her own, assuming that hers is perfectly balanced, warm and vibrant.

Certain timidities must be overcome. At the beginning of married life, the husband will accept everything from his wife. He expects her to surpass him spiritually and above all he expects her to draw him forward. Let her then use her power prudently, intelligently, delicately in virtue of her love. Let her not be motivated by the desire to count her fine successes but to spiritualize her home. Her husband can only be grateful for it. He will welcome her influence, profit by it, follow it.

MARRIAGE AND A LIFE OF PRAYER

IT IS a mistake to think that only priests or religious can attain to a life of profound payer.

A religious priest, the biographer of a young girl of the world who had been an example of magnificent fidelity and the recipient of singular graces from God, recounts that one of the theologians who examined the book expressed great admiration for the young girl.

"People believe," he said, "that the great graces of contemplation are scarcely ever found in the midst of the world. I have found in cloisters and monasteries and among the clergy, souls who have received astonishing graces of light and of ease in prayer. I can therefore speak from experience. However, the two souls who seemed to me to be the most favored were neither priests nor nuns but two persons living in the world, two mothers of families."

He added, "They were far from being complacent about the favors they received; they believed them to

be quite natural and never dreamed that they themselves were singularly privileged.”

And all that while living in the world as married women!

Then we have the example of a doctor, an excellent practitioner in a large city, much in demand because of his great skill and superior knowledge. Note his deep life of prayer as revealed from the following quotations from some of his letters.

“I recollect myself in the course of my professional visits, going from one duty to another, those duties which present themselves to me so clearly as acts of charity to my neighbor in whom I have the impression of ministering to the suffering Christ.

“In the interval which separates one act of charity from another, there spontaneously wells up in my heart irresistible movements of adoration, a necessary worship of praise, a humble and self-abasing offering of my impotence, a very real pain at being separated from the Well-Beloved of my soul, and, in the midst of it all, a consoling peace and a strong leaning on God who lifts me above depressing physical fatigue and wearing privation.”

Another time he wrote, “The sight of souls so little concerned about God causes me pain and heartache. I should like to see all creatures praise God, concern themselves solely with Him and refer all to Him. I have great difficulty lending myself to the thousand little things of here-below which have no direct connection with God.”

This interior union with God in no way hindered his exterior ministry. With what soul power did he accomplish it!

“In the midst of overwhelming activities, an impression of profound solitude enfolds my soul. Action is no longer anything more for me than the accomplishment of duty, for the only duty of my life, leaving out of the picture any consideration of this frightful I and accomplishing everything for a single purpose always present, always engulfing me—God.

“One might say that there is substituted for the egoism which is proper to me a power which is foreign to me but which draws me on while exercising over my will a force which impels and which is ever new.”

In his last letter dated August, 1936, we have these thoughts.

“It has pleased God (I should never think of asking Him for it) to grant me six months of immobilization because of a cardiac lesion. A Garden of Gethsemani? Amen.

“I was formerly taught what adoration and thanksgiving mean. Now I am immersed in adoration and thanksgiving. I have been taught that we fulfill the highest apostolate in the place where God for all eternity wants us to be. Therefore, I say three times over Amen and Thank You, my God.”

CHOICE GRACES

PERHAPS on reading the beautiful selections from the doctor’s letters I have somewhat envied his union with God. Perhaps there arose in my mind the question: “What would I have to do to achieve such close intimacy with God?”

First of all, I must remember that such a degree of union with God is in the domain of gratuitous gifts. Our Lord gives them or does not give them as He sees fit. That is His own concern. In themselves, these

gifts are no forecast of sanctity in the person who receives them. Someone can be quite perfect and never receive these favors; a person can be most faithful and attentive but either because of special difficulties of temperament or of capacity or because of God's permission he will never receive like gifts.

By the very fact that they are gratuitous, they are inherently out of proportion with human efforts. They are liberalities of God that we are powerless to merit in the formal sense of the term. I am walking along the boulevard; I meet several poor persons along the way; I give something to the second not to the first, to the fifth and not to the fourth. To none of them do I owe a thing. I have bestowed a favor pure and simple and no one can lay claim to my bounty as his due.

So too with the special favors we are considering. They manifest the munificence of God and do not prove the holiness of the recipient.

It is evident though that if God is free to bestow extraordinary graces according to His own will, in general, He dispenses them to those who by their generosity have given assurance beforehand that these favors will fall on good ground. If by right they are purely gratuitous, in fact they most often recompense a generosity that is particularly ardent, a devotedness and a striving that has been heroically maintained.

In practice, I should let God play His hand. He is well-versed in what He is doing. I should not presume to dictate to Him the method He should follow. I can play my hand too. His very own specialty is liberality; mine should be generous love. I ought to be bent on giving, not on receiving.

If in the course of my life of striving, God is pleased to give me a keener relish of Him, an understanding of Him beyond my knowledge of His perfections, a love for prayer and for sacrifices He will have free sway in me. I shall praise Him with my whole soul; but it is not to win these favors that I intend to push my fervor to its peak.

If, on the contrary, He lets me on the level of common prayer and the ordinary state of the general run of people; if He even abandons me to a spell of aridity—a common trial of earth—either for periods of time or perhaps permanently, I shall cast myself upon His love and beg Him to insure my faith in Him and to preserve my fidelity. I know what I am worth—not very much.

The soldier ought to serve. If his Captain notices him and puts him on the list for the Legion of Honor, fine! A red ribbon, however, adds nothing to the value of a man. He is worth what he gives and not what he receives.

I shall strive to give much.

JOHN M. A. FEARNS, S.T.D.
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